**REPRESENTATION OF CONSCIOUSNESS[[1]](#footnote-1)**

Representation of thoughts in narrative is obviously more complex than representation of speech.

Consciousness is sometimes referred to as SILENT SPEECH or INNER SPEECH

* Thought can be represented as A] **direct** or B] **indirect discourse**

A. “What a fool,” he thought.

B. He thought the weather in the place was horrible.

Other aspects of representing consciousness to be considered:

* Narrative prose (unlike drama/film) can tell about a character’s thoughts without them actually speaking (though drama has soliloquy and film has voiceover)
* On the level of narrative discourse, we can read the character’s thoughts although in the story world they keep them to themselves
* The presentation of consciousness enhances the **realistic effect** of the text – even though the **means are wholly unrealistic** (we can’t actually see into other people’s heads)

Three major methods of representation of thought:

1. INTERIOR MONOLOGUE
2. PSYCHONARRATION
3. NARRATED MONOLOGUE or FREE INDIRECT SPEECH/DISCOURSE

Re: 1. **INTERIOR MONOLOGUE**

* Presentation of **thought as direct speech**
* Length is of the essence – **only longish passages of uninterrupted thought** can be considered interior monologue
* Two examples:

Er, excuse me, who am I?
Hello?

Why am I here? What’s my purpose in life?
What do I mean by who am I?
Calm down, get a grip now ... oh! this is an interesting sensation, what is it? It’s a sort of ... yawning, tingling sensation in my ... my ... well I suppose I’d better start finding names for things if I want to make any headway [...] so let’s call it my stomach.
And hey, what about this whistling roaring sound going past what I’m suddenly going to call my head? Perhaps I can call that ... wind! Is that a good name? It’ll do [...] Now – have I built up any coherent picture of things yet?
No. (Douglas Adams, *The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy*, Ch. 18)

2]

no that’s no way for him has he no manners nor no refinement nor no nothing in his nature slapping us behind like that on my bottom because I didn’t call him Hugh the ignoramus that doesn’t know poetry from a cabbage that’s what you get for not keeping them in their proper place pulling off his shoes and trousers there on the chair before me so barefaced without even asking permission and standing out that vulgar way in the half of a shirt they wear to be admired like a priest or a butcher or those old hypocrites in the time of Julius Caesar of course he’s right enough in his way to pass the time as a joke sure you might as well be in bed with what with a lion God I’m sure he’d have something better to say for himself an old Lion would O well I suppose it’s because they were so plump and tempting in my short petticoat he couldn’t resist they excite myself sometimes its well for men all the amount of pleasure they get off a woman’s body we’re so round and white for them [...] (James Joyce, *Ulysses*, ‘Penelope’)

* Note that the latter example features no punctuation; it is based on the associative character of thought, i.e. on the **STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS** – a term coined by psychologist William James.
N.B.: Though it is often used in that way, stream of consciousness is ***NOT*** primarily **a narrative technique** but a term used to describe **cognitive processes**.

Re: 2. **PSYCHONARRATION**

* Stream of consciousness can be hard to follow for the reader
* Outside the avant-garde fiction it has been more common to have the narrator **tell us about the character’s thought**s
* The **heterodiegetic narrator** remains at the forefront and seems to have superior knowledge of the character’s inner life and possesses superior ability to present and assess it
* We learn about the character’s thoughts **in the narrator’s voice/vocabulary/style**
* The effect is very different from stream of consciousness: **the distance** between the narrator and the character, but – more importantly – between the character and the reader, **is maintained**
* One example:

Emma continued to entertain no doubt of her being in love. Her ideas only varied as to the how much. At first she thought it was a good deal; and afterwards but little. She had great pleasure in hearing Frank Churchill talked of; and, for his sake, greater pleasure than ever in seeing Mr. and Mrs. Weston; she was very often thinking of him, and quite impatient for a letter, that she might know how he was, how were his spirits, how was his aunt, and what was the chance of his coming to Randalls again this spring. But, on the other hand, she could not admit herself to be unhappy, nor, after the first morning, to be less disposed for employment than usual; she was still busy and cheerful; and, pleasing as he was, she could yet imagine him to have faults; and further, though thinking of him so much, and, as she sat drawing or working, forming a thousand amusing schemes for the progress and close of their attachment, fancying interesting dialogues, and inventing elegant letters; the conclusion of every imaginary declaration on his side was the she refused him. (Jane Austen, *Emma*)

Re: 3. **NARRATED MONOLOGUE aka FREE INDIRECT SPEECH/DISCOURSE**

* This is a **cross between psychonarration and interior monologue**
* The **narrator** sets the scene but **thoughts are reproduced directly** – ***as if*** they were spoken by the character – even though the narrator speaks about the character in the third person
* **Syntax is often fragmented** – e.g. incomplete sentences, exclamations
* We hear a **DUAL VOICE** – the voice of the character and that of the narrator
* This gives the **impression of immediacy**, but is also often used for (situational) **irony**: we learn about the character being misled without the narrator telling us explicitly
* One classic example – the opening scene from Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs Dalloway*:

And as she began to go with Miss Pym from jar to jar, choosing, nonsense, nonsense, she said to herself, more and more gently, as if this beauty, this scent, this colour, and Miss Pym liking her, trusting her, were a wave which she let flow over her and surmount that hatred, that monster, surmount it all; and it lifted her up and up when – oh! A pistol shot in the street outside!

* We get to hear/see Clarissa Dalloway’s thoughts and perceptions. In fact, what we are reading is a ***reproduction*** of her **stream of consciousness**.
1. Based on Stefanie Lethbridge and Jarmila Mildorf, *Basics of English Studies*,‘Chapter 2, Prose’, 69–75. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)